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MOVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN DISCUSSES SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS MAY BE ON THE WAY TO RESUMPTION AT GENEVA EARLY NEXT YEAR.

VOICE: SEVERAL OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED OR DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH FOR A STABLE AND JUST MIDDLE EAST PEACE HAVE BEEN SAYING IT IN RECENT DAYS, EACH IN THEIR FASHION. THE LATEST TO DO SO IS THE JUST-REELECTED UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL, DOCTOR KURT WALDHEIM. HE TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE AT U.N. HEADQUARTERS YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT CHANCES FOR A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT HAVE NEVER LOOKED BETTER.

IN CAIRO, PRESIDENT SADAT HAS SAID THAT HE IS WILLING TO SIGN A PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL. BUT SUCH A SETTLEMENT, HE HAS ALSO SAID, IS CONTINGENT ON ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB TERRITORY IT CAPTURED IN 1967 AND TEL AVIV'S AGREEMENT TO THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE IN THE WEST BANK AND THE GAZA STRIP. ISRAEL, IN TURN, HAS SAID THERE CAN BE NO WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT A FULL PEACE THAT GUARANTEES ITS NATIONAL SECURITY ALONG WITH ARAB RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. PRESIDENT ASSAD OF SYRIA HAS NOT SAID ANYTHING PUBLICLY, BUT UNOFFICIAL REPORTS SAY HE SUPPORTS THE SADAT STANCE.

AT THE HEART OF ALL THIS MANEUVERING IS STILL THE UNANSWERED QUESTION--AND IT'S CRUCIAL TO ANY CONFERENCE, AS THE UNITED STATES HAS SAID IN THE PAST--OF THE ROLE THE PALESTINIANS WILL PLAY IN ANY GENEVA MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS. A HINT OF A POSSIBLY MODIFIED STAND BY THE PALESTINIANS IS PROVIDED BY YASSIR ARAFAT, LEADER OF THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. IN AN INTERVIEW IN TIME MAGAZINE HE INDICATED THE P.L.O. WILL SUPPORT ANY PEACE

FORMULA THAT THOSE HE CALLED "OUR ARAB BROTHERS AND ALL OUR ALLIES" MIGHT ADVANCE AT A GENEVA CONFERENCE. BUT WITHIN THAT CONTEXT, SAID MR. ARAFAT, THE P.L.O. WILL CONTINUE TO INSIST ON ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY AS HE PUT IT--"ON ANY PART OF PALESTINE LIBERATED FROM ISRAEL OR WHICH ISRAEL WILL EVACUATE."

WHAT THIS ALL ADDS UP TO IS THAT THE PRINCIPALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION APPEAR TO HAVE MODIFIED THEIR STANDS SOMEWHAT. ALSO ENCOURAGING IS THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO RETURN TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE AT GENEVA.

DOCTOR WALDHEIM INDICATED THAT CONSULTATIONS ARE ALREADY GOING FORWARD AMONG THE PARTIES CONCERNED--INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, WHO ARE CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE SUSPENDED GENEVA TALKS. THAT THE CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES NEXT MONTH WILL IN NO WAY AFFECT THESE MOVES TOWARD PROGRESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR BY PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER AND HIS SECRETARY OF STATE-DESIGNATE CYRUS VANCE. BOTH HAVE STATED PUBLICLY THAT HIGH ON THEIR AGENDA IS THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THAT AREA.

IT WAS THIS THAT LED DOCTOR WALDHIM TO SAY AT HIS NEWS CONFERENCE THAT "WITH THIS STRONG INTEREST ONE SEES EVERYWHERE, WE HAVE A GOOD CHANCE TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES AND TO RECONVENE THE CONFERENCE."

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